

Boothwyn, PA —Congressman Joe Sestak (D-PA) toured the Upper Chichester Police Department and talked to first responders about what he has been doing in Congress to support them and their efforts to keep us safe from threats abroad and at home. This is particularly important because the greater Philadelphia region is home to 5.7 million as well as critical transportation and economic infrastructure, such as a large portion of Amtrak's Northeast Coordinator, SEPTA, and major highway infrastructure (I-95). Additionally, there are port facilities, oil refineries in close proximity to Philadelphia International Airport and I-95, gas pipelines, bridges, freight rail lines, and numerous chemical plants. These factors have led the Insurance Services Office, which assesses risk for the insurance industry, to conclude that Philadelphia is among the ten cities most vulnerable to a terrorist attack. — "Our region must be prepared for a host of potential emergencies, from natural disasters to terrorist attacks. We must all work together, federal, state, and local officials, to effectively plan and manage these crises," said Congressman Sestak. "That is why I am working in Congress to ensure that first responders have whatever resources they need to keep us safe."

Since taking office in January, the Congressman has supported a variety of efforts to increase our support for first responders. Specifically, he supported the COPS Improvements Act of 2007, a bill that demonstrates his commitment to putting 50,000 new police officers on the beat by authorizing \$6.9 billion between fiscal 2008 and 2013 for the Community Oriented Policing Services program. The COPS Improvements Act will also provide funding for "terrorism cops" as well as add a number of new policing activities, such as those designed to reduce the distribution and abuse of illegal drugs, for which the program could award grants.

Congressman Sestak also recently increased funding by \$2.1 billion for terrorism prevention, including resources for first responders. The Homeland Security Appropriations Act tightens border security by adding 3,000 new Border Patrol Agents; increases aviation security by providing funding to double the amount of cargo that can be screened; enhances port security by providing \$400 million for safety grants – 90 percent over 2007 – to protect critical port facilities and infrastructure; and contains \$400 million in security grants – more than double 2007 funding – to protect critical transit infrastructure in high-threat areas and increases chemical plant security by including providing that state and local governments can set chemical safety rules that are stronger than the federal government's.

The President had proposed eliminating the Metropolitan Medical Response System, which provides funding for hospitals and EMS services in major metropolitan areas to enhance their preparedness. Instead, Congressman Sestak pushed for increased funding for this program in the Homeland Security Appropriations bill, which provides \$50 million, \$17 million over FY 2007, for the program. The bill also provides \$50 million to continue the Interoperable Communications Grants, which is funded by the Department of Commerce to help local police, firefighters and emergency responders to talk to each other during a crisis. These two programs are essential to the Philadelphia region, which is constrained by the fact that its ambulance

dispatching system does not allow city rescue crews to communicate directly with hospitals. Evacuation plans for the city are so unspecific that some agencies expected to play a critical role do not know what to do. Furthermore, its police and fire emergency radio communications systems are unreliable on the underground sections of the city subway. The lack of communications interoperability is a serious problem, and the grants under this bill can help improve the communication flow among our first responders and thusly improve emergency response. In addition, Congressman Sestak is working to provide funding to first responders in the region, including SEPTA, to ensure their communications networks are interoperable.

Similarly, the President proposed slashing Firefighter Assistance grants by 55 percent. However, Joe helped restore this cut – providing \$570 million, which is \$23 million above FY 2007 and \$270 million above the President's request in the Homeland Security Appropriations Bill. In addition, the President proposed eliminating the \$115 million SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) program, which helps fund hiring and training of additional firefighters. Instead, Congressman Sestak supported providing \$230 million (an increase of \$115 million).

Joe also voted to pass the recommendations of the bipartisan 9/11 Commission, which included: improving baggage and cargo screening at airports to ensure that 100 percent of cargo on passenger aircraft is checked in three years; improving efforts to prevent proliferation of WMD; requiring the President to impose sanctions on any person who trades nuclear enrichment technology to a non-nuclear weapons state; enhancing communications interoperability for first responders, by establishing a stand-alone communications interoperability grant program at the Department of Homeland Security; and improving communication between federal, state and local agencies and as agencies within each branch of government.

Congressman Sestak has called for a responsible redeployment from Iraq since he was elected and he has continued to work towards that goal.

"More and more retired generals and other military experts have determined that keeping large numbers of combat troops in Iraq and continuing our military occupation there is weakening our overall efforts in combating the threat of global terrorism and undermining our national security interests," added the Congressman.

Over the last six months, Congressman Sestak has fought for a new direction in Iraq, calling for

a responsible redeployment of our troops so that we can focus on global terrorism, with vote after vote demanding a new Iraq policy.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.